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Educational News and Editorial Comment

SOCIAL STUDIES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

During the academic year 1917-18 the Bureau of Education in co-operation with the Food Administration of the United States published a series of lessons entitled *Lessons in Community and National Life*. These lessons dealt with topics appropriate to classes studying community civics. There were lessons on international trade relations, on colonial and modern manufacturing methods, and on other subjects not likely to excite any question in the minds of the most conservative students of society. In the course of the preparation of lessons on society it became necessary for the editors of this series to introduce some matters which are less commonly discussed in public schools. The fact that there are labor organizations and that these organizations represent a definite movement

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in the industrial world which must be recognized was discussed in certain of the lessons. The problems of social insurance and governmental control of industries were discussed. The editors were very careful to see to it that in all of these discussions examples were chosen from such sources that the national government would be in no wise compromised through the publication of the accounts by the Bureau of Education. Fortunately the federal government of the United States has taken a good deal of interest in a number of these matters; and in the reports of a number of commissions, as well as in actual legislation, the government of the United States has shown itself to be a progressive social agency.

The lessons prepared by the Bureau found a wide use in the public schools of the United States. Now comes the reaction on the part of conservatives. This reaction is significant because it indicates the sources of opposition to a type of study which is sure to become increasingly common in the schools of this country. It is idle to believe that a nation that has been as deeply stirred as has this will shut its eyes and its mind to a discussion of social problems. It is also idle to believe that the children in the public schools of this country are to remain uninformed on matters of progressive social legislation.

That the meager and very careful discussion of these problems in the lessons published by the Bureau was enough to stir up opposition is made clear by the following extract from a New York daily of January 24:

Magnus W. Alexander, managing director of the National Industrial Conference Board, has made an attack here upon a textbook, *Lessons in Community and National Life*, which, he said, Secretary of the Interior Lane was attempting to introduce into the public schools of the country, with the approval of President Wilson.

Addressing the National Boot and Shoe Manufacturers' Association, Mr. Alexander asked its co-operation to induce the Interior Department to with-

draw its support of the book, "before it really began its insidious work in the schools." He doubted if the President "could possibly have seen what was to follow his advocacy of the work."

The speaker asserted that the book contained "unwarranted propaganda favoring social insurance, industrial insurance, labor unionism, and governmental control of private activity."

One effect of this attack by Mr. Alexander is exhibited in the following editorial from the *Capital Daily Press* of Bismarck, North Dakota. This editorial is quoted, not because the writer of the present editorial sympathizes fully with all of its views, but because it shows that any effort to close the schools to a full consideration of social problems is sure to arouse violent partisan feelings and misinterpretations.

WILSON CALLED A BOLSHEVIK

President Wilson recently saw fit to write a foreword indorsing a book, *Lessons in Community and National Life*, by Professors Judd and Marshall of the University of Chicago. This book is used as a textbook in certain schools.

This has caused an indignant clamor from our American junkers. M. W. Alexander, manager of the National Industrial Council Board—whatever that is—severely condemned the book at a convention of the National Shoe Manufacturers' Association and appealed to the bootmakers to bring all possible pressure to bear upon Congress to stop the distribution of the book in the schools.

Mr. Alexander termed the book "a menace to the inherent rights of the juvenile population to be free until they have attained sufficient maturity to choose for themselves the course they intend to pursue in life."

The book, it seems, favors social insurance, labor unionism, the eight-hour day, and government control of public utilities.

This, of course, is sufficient to condemn it in the eyes of stupid Bourbons like Mr. Alexander, and they are greatly concerned lest any such doctrine become inculcated in the "plastic minds of our youth."

This uproar is screamingly funny. For generations the reactionaries have maintained their grip on the control of our educational institutions, and from the kindergarten to college, the "plastic minds of our youth" have been sedulously taught the superior sacredness of private property and the supremacy of dollar rights over human rights. This is the one thing that has made

political and industrial progress so disappointingly slow. In order to gain converts to the cause of social justice it has been necessary to offset the false and pernicious doctrine deliberately taught in the schools and re-educate people to the real facts of political economy and the genuine fundamentals of life.

This perversion of education and prostitution of "learning" has been the strongest bulwark of entrenched privilege. More than any other one thing it has enabled the profiteers to fool the people and retain their unfair monopolies.

No wonder spokesmen of Big Business protest when a book which evidently discusses modern industrial problems accidentally creeps into the schools. No wonder they become almost hysterical at the prospect that the "plastic minds of our youth" may be fed with facts instead of being cunningly poisoned by capitalistic propaganda. No wonder they call President Wilson a Bolshevik because he has indorsed such a work.

It is very amusing, watching these King Canutes of privilege vainly trying to sweep back the tides of democracy which are soon to overwhelm them.

And in the meantime they are advertising the book and it probably will run into fresh editions. The sensible thing would have been to have bought up all the copies and quietly suppressed the work. Now it is too late. Mr. Alexander will find that advertising pays. He also will find that you can't imprison an idea or suppress facts by congressional enactment.

Even the schools—long the stronghold of privilege—are learning the truth and it spells the speedy doom of our reactionary Mr. Alexanders and all these stupid spokesmen stand for.

Nor does the reaction against Mr. Alexander's position come merely from the radical papers of the Northwest. The *New York World* reports in a full column the meeting at which Mr. Alexander spoke. The reporter at this meeting evidently had a sufficient sense of humor to see the absurdity of Mr. Alexander's remarks and writes at some length about the whole situation:

Delegates to the convention of the National Boot and Shoe Manufacturers' Association at the Hotel Astor Wednesday were alarmed when Magnus W. Alexander, managing director of the National Industrial Conference Board, told them that the government in publishing a series of *Lessons in*

Community and National Life was spreading "insidious, unwarranted propaganda, particularly injurious for reading by youth in the plastic age when youth is inclined to take for granted and as proved all that is said through the medium of the books in his classroom."

The delegates were still more alarmed when Mr. Alexander told them these lessons were sponsored by President Wilson, backed by Secretary Lane, and distributed among the schools where they would "mould opinion in favor of social insurance, labor unionism, the eight-hour day, industrial insurance, and governmental control of private activity."

A reporter for *The World* was alarmed too and looked up the lessons. He found that they were published last year, that they bore the imprint of the Bureau of Education of the Department of the Interior, "in co-operation with the United States Food Administration," and that they had been prepared under the direction of Charles H. Judd, director of the School of Education, University of Chicago, and Leon C. Marshall, dean of the School of Commerce and Administration, University of Chicago, which the reporter recalled was endowed by the well-known Socialist, John D. Rockefeller.

More alarmed than ever the reporter found it was quite true that the President had sponsored the lessons, for under date of August 23, 1917, he wrote from the White House "To School Officers":

"The war is bringing to the minds of our people a new appreciation of the problems of national life and a deeper understanding of the meaning and aims of democracy. . . . I urge that teachers and other school officers increase materially the time and attention devoted to instruction bearing directly on the problems of community and national life.

"In order that there may be definite material at hand with which the schools may at once expand their teaching, I have asked Mr. Hoover and Commissioner Claxton to organize the proper agencies for the preparation and distribution of suitable lessons for the elementary grades and for the high-school classes."

And so three books of 264 pages each were prepared and published; bound in manila paper of cadet gray, bearing on their covers the bull buffalo that is the crest of Secretary Lane's department, and procurable from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., at 25 and 15 cents a copy.

The reporter was almost too alarmed to read even the table of contents of Series B, which is for "the first class of the high school and the upper grades

of the elementary school." But when he found that lesson B-1 dealt with "The Effect of War on Commerce in Nitrate" he took a chance. He felt his way on to lesson B-4, and had his fears brought back to new life—

"This means that the people of Chicago ate more than 444,000,000 eggs in a year. If all these eggs were laid end to end they would more than reach from the Canadian boundary to the Gulf of Mexico."

But there was worse to come in lesson B-7. The reporter, even though he is past the plastic age, began to understand Mr. Alexander's belief that "the ideas this book seeks to impart are socialistic." Listen:

"In many city homes in the tenement districts the children do not have enough food. For example, they have for breakfast a piece of bread and a cup of so-called coffee. That is neither enough nor is it of the right kind. The child would be much better without the coffee, and he ought to have some fat with the bread."

It did not seem possible that the lessons could go beyond that, but they do, in B-12, where it is bluntly declared:

"With the corporation matters are very different. The owners are very numerous; they may not even be acquainted with one another; they do not 'run the business' in any personal way.

"They elect a Board of Directors. The Board of Directors appoints a manager. The final result is that in some concerns there are a thousand or more owners scattered over several different countries who know little or nothing about the business, and some of them care little or nothing about it. They are interested mainly in the rate of dividends they receive."

And as to labor unions. Lesson B-29 concludes in this deplorable fashion:

"People differ very much in their opinion of labor organizations. Some think that these organizations serve no good purpose, and are indeed dangerous. Others think that they are very helpful, not only to the worker, but to the community at large. The truth is that there are good unions and bad unions, good union policies and bad union policies. Like most other institutions, they are good or bad according to the use which is made of them."

Like the scorpion, Series B of the lessons carries its sting in its tail. Lesson B-31, the last, pictures conditions in a factory where "employment management" is installed. The factory is represented as belonging to the Summit (note the insidious choice of a name) Manufacturing Company. One Mr. Seaton has taken employment there:

"Safety devices are provided to protect him against the rapidly moving belts and shafts. If he is injured, in spite of these precautions, or if he falls

ill, first-aid medical care is provided at the factory, and the factory physician and nurse follow him to his home.

"If he cannot work for a time, 'workmen's compensation' in case of accident or health insurance in case of sickness is paid him. If he has a grievance against his foreman or a fellow workman, or if he is dissatisfied with a rule or a tool, a shop committee on which the workers are represented will hear his complaint and adjust it fairly.

"All these are part of an enlightened labor policy which is now carried out by our more progressive factories and stores. Whether or not they are carried out under the direction of the employment department or by a medical department or by a so-called welfare department, they are all involved in employment management. For employment management means the development and wise utilization of the human resources of the plant."

This whole discussion furnishes a legitimate opportunity to call attention to the fact that the schools have been very deficient in times past in their treatment of social problems. One of the reasons why the schools have not ventured to enter this field is undoubtedly to be found in the attitude of conservatives like Mr. Alexander and the fear that teachers are under of offending boards of education and others of that type. The time has come when there ought to be a very clear and explicit assertion on the part of educational people that they will not be dominated by such criticism as is here presented. The schools of a democracy have a right to discuss democratic and popular matters. If the school people of this country are not aroused by this and other types of opposition to an assertion of their independence in educational matters, it is difficult to understand how they can claim in any large way to be leaders of public opinion even for the coming generation. The manufacturers' association has repeatedly made the effort to control and direct public education in this country. It has striven in many states and even through agencies set up by the federal government to divide the educational system into two separate parts. It has attempted to bring it about that a certain group

of children who are expected to spend their lives laboring in factories shall have a meager education very largely devoted to the cultivation of skill of hand. The agencies which have striven in this country to divide the school system supported their contentions for a long time by references to the German example of efficiency. Since that example has failed them so conspicuously, they are now resorting to methods exemplified by criticism of lessons on social affairs.

SCHOOL LIBRARIES

New England has an association of school librarians. At a recent meeting a number of papers were presented, all of which indicate the growth of the movement for the establishment of school libraries. Before reporting some of these papers it will be proper to call attention to the fact that schools are using in ever-increasing degree many different books in the preparation of lessons rather than the single textbook which has so long been traditional. Instead of reading a single book on history, pupils are being sent to the library to read from a number of different authorities and to compare the statements found in different books. In science the same practice is arising. English is no longer confined to a few classics, carefully dissected, but is aiming by laboratory methods and individual conferences to induce children to read widely in the literature of their own country and of other countries.

This change in the method of organizing classroom work implies a new type of equipment in public schools. That equipment consists in a library. The effective use of a library in turn depends upon the presence of a librarian who can sympathetically direct the interests of children and can give some instruction in the methods of finding material scattered through a number of different volumes.

Associations similar to that organized in New England ought to become common in all parts of the country, and

papers of the type reported for that association ought to become sufficiently common to impress teachers in all departments of the school. The following quotation from the report made by the secretary gives the details of the papers read at this meeting:

Miss Martha Carolina Pritchard, librarian of the Bridgewater Normal School, president of the Association, was second speaker. Her plea was for the school library especially as a factor in the Americanization of the foreign pupils in whose homes there is an utter absence of books. She also emphasized the need in normal schools of training the teachers to get at this, and of impressing upon them what the public libraries will do for them if they will do their part. She showed a plan worked out at Teachers College in New York, in a class during a summer session, for extending library instruction through the grades allotting definite phases of the subject to the grades capable of grasping them.

Her plea for familiarity with the world of books for children brought forth comments from Miss Newton of the Bridgewater Normal, Mr. Lowe, of the Massachusetts State Library Commission, and Mr. Thurber and Mr. Palmer, of the Newton Technical High, in which was emphasized the need that children be made to feel at home in a library, that the love of books be taught them, and that from the school man's point of view technical knowledge in a librarian counts less than love of books and power to lead—a great encouragement to the school struggling to organize libraries and as yet unable to afford a trained librarian.

The third speaker was the librarian herself, Miss Gladys Bigelow. She described the typical day in the library, detailing methods and picturing the library activities with a vividness that made her guests lookers-on during a school day rather than Saturday morning visitors.

The afternoon program offered two speakers. A third, Miss Griffin, of the Children's Museum of Boston (Jamaica Plains), made a welcome impromptu addition. She displayed French war posters and other material of war interest which are available as loans to any New England school defraying transportation expenses.

Mr. Henry Sanborn, librarian of the Bridgeport public libraries, who has recently returned from the Middle West, made a plea for proper legislation to provide state supervision and support for uniform school libraries, not merely in destitute districts, but in places where need is acute, though less apparent.

As supervisor of children's work in the Boston Public Library Miss Alice Jordan has excellent opportunity to judge the appeal of books, and in her informal summaries and selected readings from the new holiday editions gave a delightful insight, not only into the charms of the books, but into the tastes of boys and girls.

INDUSTRIAL CHEMISTRY

The *Literary Digest* contained in a recent number an interesting full-page editorial on the developments of industrial chemistry. The secondary schools of Europe, especially those of England, have devoted a good deal of attention to industrial chemistry. Indeed, the municipal institutions in general throughout England have been driven to courses that should be useful in a practical way in the textile and other related industries, and they have developed much more fully than our American institutions scientific courses for young men and women who are going into the industries.

The plea put forth by the *Literary Digest* for an enlargement of courses in industrial chemistry in our American high schools is vigorous and forceful. It is not possible here to quote the full page which is there given. Some extracts will, however, serve to indicate the tenor of the discussion.

Before the war chemistry was to the layman a dry, uninteresting subject, one to be avoided because he did not know enough about it to talk with any degree of certainty. In fact, was there anything to talk about? The transition from this feeling of indifference to one of intense interest took but a matter of a few months and has been one of the most remarkable developments since the war.

But why was America, with her tremendous natural resources, dependent upon any country for these products? Simply because there was no public interest. There was no incentive for the young blood of the country to train themselves for chemical pursuits. The capitalists did not understand the tremendous possibilities in the development of the American chemical industry. The government did not understand the economic value of America owning and controlling its own chemical industries. In short, the people in general did not realize the extent to which the economic fabric of the nation was dependent upon the chemist.

The entire country had a most rude awakening when it learned that its supply of potash, medicinals, optical glassware, porcelain, etc., was cut off. To say there was consternation would be to express it lightly. The general public began to understand that such industries as the textile, leather, and lithographic ink were solely dependent upon dyes, and that these industries supplied the very clothes and shoes they wore, and the books and periodicals they read.

Flaming editorials were written, Congress was swamped with bills of all kinds and descriptions, suggesting remedies, all attacking the slothfulness of the American chemist in ever permitting such a state of affairs to exist, and while the layman attacked the chemist, the sudden stoppage of dyes almost caused a panic in many trades, particularly the clothing trade. Many people were literally thrown out of employment over night, for what was the use of weaving cloth if there were no dyes? Even our cotton industry was thrown into jeopardy, for if there were no dyes what was the use of raising so much cotton?

The public interest, first created by imminent catastrophe, followed by the stimulation of the war for all things chemical, has changed the public viewpoint of chemistry from indifference to intense interest. But now that the war is won, will this interest continue to be manifested by the layman?

This is a question which should have the thought of every chemical man in the country. During the past four years our chemical industry has laid bare vast opportunities. It has merely scratched the surface. Its future depends upon hard, never-ceasing work, the expansion of the existing possibilities, and sympathetic public opinion.

This sympathetic public opinion which has been started by publicity in the editorial pages of newspapers and periodicals must be strengthened, must be sustained. But the general public is fickle and has changes of heart from one day to another. They have been reading so much about chemicals and the new chemical industry, that they are about to take it for granted, and then they are on the way to indifference. And the indifference of the public means the regression of the industry.

Advertising in the newspapers and periodicals of the country will play an important part.

To foster and increase sympathetic public opinion, to enlist the interest of capital, to protect new adventures, to widen the peace time market, the leaders of the American chemical industry will come out of the laboratory and out of the factory and talk to the thinking public in the magazines and newspapers of America.

NEW JERSEY HIGH-SCHOOL CONFERENCE

Conferences of high-school teachers and principals have frequently been held in the state universities of the Middle West. The practice originated in a conference called by President Harper at the University of Chicago, but it has spread so widely throughout the middle states that it is now an established institution in many of the states. The following account is given of a conference organized in the state of New Jersey patterned on the example of these western state conferences. The attendance at this conference was six hundred twenty-five. More than three hundred attended the dinner which was a part of the program. The conference was held at the State University at New Brunswick.

It began with a discussion of educational measurements under the direction of the department of education of the University, with Mr. Stewart A. Courtis as the speaker both Friday afternoon and Saturday morning. His talks were on "Problems of Measurement as Applied to Reading, Composition, and Spelling," and "Measurements as an Aid to Teaching." Both talks made a strong impression upon superintendents and principals. The conference on measurements is the second conference of this kind to be held by the education department of the State University.

The Commissioner of Education presided at the dinner given at the quarters of the Student Army Training Corps, and the affair proved to be one of the most enjoyable get-together phases of the conference. The after-dinner speakers were President Demarest, Dr. Henry Snyder, and Assistant Commissioner Meredith.

The evening session was in charge of the High School Teachers' Association, and the first address was by the Honorable P. W. Wilson, a member of the British Parliament, who spoke on "What the War Has Done Educationally." The

second speaker was Professor W. H. Schofield, of Harvard, secretary of the American Council of Education. His subject was "Education after the War."

On Saturday the following associations gave the regular programs as part of the general conference: New Jersey Mathematics Teachers' Association, the Association of Modern Language Teachers, High School Commercial Teachers' Association, the Association of Teachers of English, New Jersey Science Teachers' Association, Teachers of Classical Studies, Teachers of the Social Sciences, and Teachers of Public Speaking. At each of the meetings practical discussions were held bearing upon the question of method and content in the respective fields represented.

The feeling of the conference seemed to be that desirable modifications in purpose and subject-matter will need to be made in many of the high-school subjects because of new situations arising as the result of the war, and all indications point to the fact that the associations will become more active working groups than has hitherto been the case. It is a significant fact that many superintendents and supervising principals were in attendance, thus showing their interest in secondary education. The full program is not given here, as it is hoped that a volume of proceedings may later be published.

The plan of the conference was first presented by Assistant Commissioner Meredith in 1915 to the High School Principals' Round Table, and later presented to each of the associations for consideration. One or two tentative dates for the conference were set, but it was not until this year that plans could be perfected. In the meantime the Education Department of Rutgers College held its first conference for school administrators on educational measurements under the direction of Dr. C. H. Elliott. It was then planned to unite this group with the various associations dealing with secondary education,

and the facilities of the State University were offered. No new association was contemplated. The conference has simply afforded a means of temporary federation of existing associations.

It was the expressed desire of those in attendance that the conference be continued, and the prospects are good for an attendance of one thousand or more next year. Plans are now being made for next year's program, which will include problems of measurement, and the reorganization of the content of various high-school units will be undertaken. Attempts will also be made to interrelate various subjects, such as English and history, mathematics and science, etc. Much may be expected from this renewed interest in secondary-school problems.